

Delightful Entertainment for A. C. W. W. Delegates

Following is a continuation of the report of the Triennial Conference, A.C.W.W., begun by Florence P. Eadie in the Fall *Home and Country*.

Gay and delightful social affairs followed each day's busy conference sessions—receptions and parties by Foreign Embassies and Legations, High Commissioners, the Lord Mayor and Corporation of London, the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths and Groceries, Women Journalists and many other organizations. Here we made friends with country women of the world. We never attempted to remember their names, often couldn't even pronounce them, but merely called them Finland, Latvia, Australia, South Africa or India, and they called us Ontario. In London and in private homes in rural England and Scotland, we felt something of the integrity and dependability of the British people.

Pleasant Week-ends

An old friend, who has been abroad many times, said she envied me my first trip, as no later trips give such a thrill. I know this must be true also of one's first trip into Rural England, if it happens on a perfect day in June and covers such places of interest and beauty as arranged for us by Essex County Institutes. Some twenty countries were represented in the two buses which left London for the week-end. We drove first through the busy streets to Woodford Green and to Epping Forest, an old royal preserve thrown open to the public by Queen Victoria and now a playground for North Londoners; then in and out through narrow winding English lanes, through picturesque villages with quaint thatched cottages, pretty gardens, and pubs with such amusing names as "The Angel and Harp", "Fighting Cocks", "Jovial Sailor".

Hedges and roses were everywhere. Even where most humble houses crowded the street, some flowers flaunted their gay bloom and seemed to say, "I will grow and be beautiful even in this narrow space". Hawthorne trees, white and rose, welcomed us along the way; huge ancient chestnut trees with gorgeous pink blossoms vied with laburnum in beauty. Historical old buildings and churches, standing now a testament to the workmanship and craftsmanship of men who lived hundreds of years ago, beckoned us to explore them.

We passed through the village of Bishop Stortford where Cecil Rhodes was born and on to Stansted and Ugley where Institute women welcomed us and gave us coffee. What friendliness and hospitality was extended to us here and later at Finchingfield and Langley. Oxford House and gardens, the estate of Mr. Tenant adjoining the Institute Hall, were open to us. The red brick house, originally a small post house belonging to King James I, was very lovely with beautiful old furniture, pictures, and cheery fireplaces.

Rural Housing Scheme

Already we were regretting the unattractive modern houses creeping into Rural England and how happy we were when we arrived at Finchingfield to see something of their Rural Housing Scheme. New cottages had been built, with modern conveniences, but preserving the quaint English style in architecture. Cottage owners proudly showed us through their clean, attractive homes, with a garden spot for flowers and vegetables. Equally interesting were some of the rehabilitated cottages, fresh with clean plaster, levelled floors and improved heating facilities. Even in June, tucked away in an accessible chest, were the gas masks for every member of the family. Blue and white signs on houses along the way indicated the Air Wardens' headquarters. All too soon we had to say good-bye to Finchingfield, but I still can see from the bus on the hill the village green, the unobtrusive shops,

vine-covered cottages and flower gardens.

Finally we arrived at the Federation of Essex Women's Institute Folk Dance Festival at Langley.

Essex County Institute members gave us tea and directed us to such outstanding features of the Festival programme as the famous Morris Dancers by Thaxted Morris men, and the play, "The Shoemaker's Holiday". What a gala festival it was, out in the open with terraced lawn leading down to a huge expanse of green. Merrie England dancers in picturesque garb, children in fairy tale frocks and players in Elizabethan costumes mingled with Essex County people and country women from many countries. What fun it was to meet by chance Major and Mrs. Luard, cousins of Luards in my own home township.

Our hostess, Mrs. Bull, of "The General Orchard", Little Baddow, located Miss Ingrid Osvald, Superintendent of the Swedish farm-house management schools, and me, and soon we were passing through the holly-arched entrance of "The General's Orchard". Sunday began with a truly English walk through woodland glen and country lanes, followed by a visit to a neighbouring farm house, a drive to a famous old Abbey, and tea with new acquaintances, the Luards. Refreshed, happy and in love with Rural England, we returned to London.

Later, I enjoyed the Highlands of Bonnie Scotland with a truly Scotch host and hostess, on a farm, "Auchendune", near Culloden Moor. Here Campbells are Campbells and McNabs are McNabs with tartan kilt and pride in old clan warfare.

I went to Dublin and Cork for real Irish hospitality and Irish smiles and tears. The Irish Country Women's Association arranged entertainment and tours to places of interest in and about Dublin, while our hostess near Cork excelled in a real Irish way in giving a New Zealand delegate and myself a pleasant time. We attended a special regional meeting, with programme portraying some of their activities.

Rural Hospitality.

At the conclusion of the Conference, private homes throughout the land were open to us, and County Federations arranged special regional, county and branch programmes.

Regional Meetings Attended

Cambridgeshire, Isle of Ely and Huntingdonshire Federations received us at Ely where we visited Ely Cathedral, founded in 673 by the Lady Ethelreda, daughter of the King of the East Anglians, and wife of Egfrid, King of Northumbria. The Bishop of Ely challenged the women to be courageous, patient and responsible, and when building the nations' homes to make family life strong and free. He predicted that World Peace will come only when nations know each other and learn to respect and love each other as people. He considered the country women's international organization a tremendous force in building for World Peace and urged them to greater effort and achievement.

On the green in front of the Bishop's Palace in a beautiful and historic setting, the ladies of Ely Institute portrayed in pageant some scenes from the life of Ethelreda. It was so stately and dignified, so realistic with historic costumes and suitable setting, that we found ourselves visualizing the Isle of Ely with its first monastery, and Abbess Ethelreda.

Back to Cambridge, the great University City of twenty-four Colleges, the next day to attend Cambridgeshire Women's Institute Council meeting which corresponds in many respects to our district annual. Here, as elsewhere, one marvelled at the efficiency and precision of business procedures and adherence to programme schedule. When ten minutes were allotted to a report or address, everyone kept within the time limit.

(Continued next col.)

Reading Holds the Interest of Institute Members

Ontario Institute reports to the Department (during 1937-38) showed that:—

- 31 Institutes in 13 counties own their own libraries.
- 3 Institutes own a lending library.
- 101 Institutes used the travelling library service.
- 40 Institutes in 20 counties gave financial assistance to local libraries.
- 5 Institutes purchased books for libraries.
- 189 Institutes reported a circulating library in the immediate community.
- 147 Institutes reported that there is no circulating library in the community and the travelling library is not used.

Many Institutes have sent no information concerning library service. These reports make us realize that the Institutes have just made a beginning in the use of library facilities. There is much still to be done.

The *Institute News* of Manitoba in August, 1938, gave the following excellent suggestions:

"Reserve the whole of at least one Institute meeting a year for the consideration of a good book, e.g., Madam Curie, The House of Exile, Beyond Sing the Woods and others. Have the book reviewed by a member or non-member, a man or woman, whoever is best able to make the book a vital experience for the members. Ask that bits be read aloud, either by the person reviewing it or someone else as the book is reviewed.

"Instead of reserving one meeting, a book might be reviewed chapter by chapter, reserving 10 or 15 minutes of each meeting for the review and for reading aloud.

"If a member knows and loves poetry and reads well, why not ask her to read a poem at each meeting and to tell, when she can, what moved the author to write it.

"Foster among three or four or eight people with inclination towards reading "a reading group". Such a group might read together and aloud, chapter by chapter, such a book as "Madame Curie", or a play or poem. The important thing is to get people beyond just talking about books to reading them. I remember hearing, on my visit to the Scandinavian countries, young men from the farms and forests of Sweden, with limited education, reading together plays by Strindberg and Ibsen. They represented characters and, as they read, unconsciously became the people they represented. It was all very simple and alive and real.

"Work toward a community gathering once a year that will bring the people both young and old together to consider "books in the life of the people". The program for such a meeting can be worked out in many ways and may include a book review, reading aloud and talks on books and the development of libraries."

One of the big problems is to make books available at reasonable cost in rural districts where there is no library service. The facilities of the Travelling Library Service are outlined in *The Handbook*, pp. 28-29.

The Institute might have a book exchange. Members could bring to the meeting one or more books which they have read to exchange with others. Or, each member might buy one book during the year to exchange with others.

The Women's Institutes in Beeton in Simcoe County aided the library in an interesting way by holding a book tea. Tables were arranged to represent periods and authors, both old and modern. The menu was planned to present a list of books by the various authors. A competition was held with a new book as the award.

We shall be glad to hear how you support reading in your Institute. Please send the information to The Superintendent of Women's Institutes, Parliament Buildings, Toronto.

and how I quaked on various occasions for fear I might infringe on this commendable rule.

The business-like presentation and discussion of their 1939 budget was most interesting. They urged branches to draft a budget and to be cautious and wise in their financial obligations, donations and undertakings. "Institute Branches are not money-making organizations" recalled a similar statement I have heard repeated often in Ontario. Committee chairmen reported that 5,000 children had been reached through health and social welfare activities, rural housing projects had been undertaken, litter baskets had been placed where necessary in an effort to keep the country-side neat and tidy (councils had financed the clearing of these baskets), schools had been conducted for leaders and judges in home-crafts, agricultural produce, music and drama and free nutrition and gardening lectures had been available.

After listening to their discussion on the feasibility of organizing a Produce Guild and making inquiries regarding their Guild of Learners of Home Crafts, I realized these Learner's Guilds parallel in some respects the educational programme available to Ontario women through the co-operative programme. The Produce Guild, for instance, helps members to become proficient in the subjects in which they are interested by the arrangement of conferences, classes, schools, tests and by giving practical instruction and technical advice. In order to receive the privileges of the Guild, members pay a membership fee of one shilling.

Institute Visited

Early in the afternoon I returned to an Orwell Institute meeting in

Mrs. King's garden. There I heard a representative from the Women's Voluntary Services for Civil Defense explain various fields of women's work in civil defense. She concluded with, "Where there is no vision the people perish". Canteen workers, cyclists and messengers, creche workers, domestic workers, respiration assemblers, telephonists and volunteers for duties in connection with the care and entertainment of billeted children were some of the occupations cited. This, in June, was only one more evidence of preparation for war and the number of busy members already enrolled was an indication of the willingness, calmness and intelligence with which English women respond to the call to service. This Institute had been reviving folk dances in the school and the children merrily danced the May Pole Dances on the green during the programme.

A Profound Experience

From the very first day to the final service at Canterbury, and the last bit of hospitality, it was a most profound and enriching experience—listening to addresses, participating in discussions, chatting over a tea cup at the Italian Embassy, dancing at an Irish Ceilidh (party), enjoying a reception at Mrs. Chamberlain's home, No. 10 Downing Street and visiting rural homes. Everywhere one felt the significance, possibilities and importance of the organizations represented by these delegates. While we may speak different languages, wear different type of clothing, live on a large or small farm in the North or South hemisphere, our fundamental interests and needs are the same the world over. Yes, we are all working for better homes, healthier children, happier home life, and throughout the world, Peace.